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Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 762
Education - High School Graduation Requirements - Applications for Student Financial Aid
Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs
Senator Paul Pinsky, Chair
March 10, 2020

Thank you, Senator Pinsky, for the opportunity to speak on this important legislation.

Allow me to acknowledge our Senator—Senator Kagan.

I strongly urge the committee to adopt Senate Bill 762 to make the completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) a requirement.

This committee knows well the challenges many students face in affording a postsecondary education.

You know that, nationally, less than eight percent of students from the lowest income quartile complete college in a timely fashion.

You know that the hard working part-time student often doesn't complete. National data says that less than eight percent of such students complete an associate's degree within four years of high school graduation.

You know that making ends meet is a challenge for a growing number of families—it takes \$90,000 income for a family of four to make ends meet in Montgomery County.

You also know jobs go unfilled in Maryland for lack of skilled talent—jobs of the future require a postsecondary education.

That's why you adopted the Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship for which we are grateful.

Here's the problem: many families don't think college is a possibility for their child. Some are worried the costs are out of reach. Some are daunted by the process. Some are just too busy working to make ends meet to worry about the future.

MC tries to overcome these barriers through direct outreach, collaboration with high school counselors, and events to educate parents and families about the FAFSA.

Additionally, the College's ACES coaches who are embedded in 14 high schools in Montgomery County work not only with their students but with their families. Coaches spend time with parents helping them to understand the value of college, demystifying the application process, and helping them complete the FAFSA.

Unfortunately, all of this is not enough.

I know because as a young woman I had big dreams.

I know because I had a dedicated but over-worked and proud single parent, my father.

I know because a completed FAFSA seemed improbable for me.

But, I knew it was my ticket out of the south side of Chicago.

With the adoption of this legislation more students will complete the FAFSA and know they can afford college, more students will attend college, and more students will join the talent pool—and, like my family, forever change the trajectory of their lives.

Help us to continue to open ever-wider the doors of opportunity, expand economic mobility, and create an ever-expanding homegrown talent pool.

Let's help create more MC alumni like Sol Graham.

Sol's life and that of his family was forever changed thanks to the education he obtained in Maryland.

After earning his education, Sol went on to found Quality Biologics and become an industry leader. Today the company is run by his daughter and Sol is a philanthropist—helping more students get a degree and change their lives.

And, I know I am here speaking before you as the Montgomery College President because my father finally completed my FAFSA.

Please vote yes on SB 762.

Thank you.